

# The Journal

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## Quarry project voted down

■ The Jefferson County Commission rejects a petition to rezone the property for commercial use by a 3-2 count.

By BETH HENRY  
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CHARLES TOWN — Jefferson County commissioners struck down a petition to allow commercial uses at the Old Standard Quarry property on Thursday, after a crowd of about 100 people showed up to see the vote.

The controversial plans for a \$250 to 300 million hotel and upscale commercial development attracted hundreds of

supporters and opponents in recent weeks, and many audience members at Thursday's regular meeting wore stickers that showed their positions for and against the plans.

County commissioners themselves were divided on the issue; President Frances Morgan and commissioners Rusty Morgan and Jim Surkamp voted to deny the petition to rezone the property to allow for commercial uses, while commissioners Greg Corliss and Dale Manuel voted against the motion.

Corliss and Manuel said they wanted to see more economic development, jobs and a stronger tax base that would be created by this type of project. However, Surkamp, Rusty Morgan and Frances Morgan said they could not support commercial uses at the site because of traffic concerns and the sensitive location next to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park land.

Commissioners heard 15 minutes of arguments from people on both sides of the issue during the meeting, which was moved from the courthouse to the Old Charles Town Library's meeting room to accommodate the overflowing crowd.

Those who spoke in support of the commercial rezoning included the developers' attorney Jim Campbell, Delegate Bob Tabb, D-Jefferson, and a number of

See QUARRY A2

Delegate Bob Tabb, D-Jefferson, speaks in favor of a proposed \$250 million to \$300 million commercial project during a Jefferson County Commission meeting Thursday, where a rezoning request for the Old Standard Quarry site was denied.

Journal photo by Beth Henry



## Quarry A2

concerned business leaders and residents who wanted to see more jobs and an increased tax base.

"This is a crucial element to the future of Jefferson County," Tabb said. "I still think it's about jobs and economic development. ... Jefferson County is a great place to live and work."

Supporters said Jefferson County desperately needed the projected 6,000 new jobs and \$4.4 million in tax revenues that could have been generated if the commercial plans were approved.

Meanwhile, those who asked the commission to reject commercial uses at the site included county residents, town leaders from Bolivar and Harpers Ferry and Joy Oakes, a representative of the National Parks Conservation Association.

Harpers Ferry Mayor James Addy said traffic increases and urban encroachment on the area would be a big problem if the rezoning was approved.

"Preserve our historic district ... give us a break on this," Addy said.

The commissioners who voted against the rezoning petition said

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**Herb Jonkers**  
developer

they didn't think the vote would mean the end of discussions.

Frances Morgan said that although she did not think the proposed commercial project was appropriate for that area of the county, she said a different proposal could be brought forward in the future that might be compatible with the county's comprehensive plan.

Manuel and Corliss felt otherwise, however, and said they wanted to continue gathering more information about this particular project instead of rushing to vote.

"We shouldn't slam the door shut today," Manuel said.

A vote for rezoning would have allowed developers to build 2 million square feet of upscale

commercial office space and a hotel at the site, which is south of U.S. 340 along Millville Road. A park, hiking trail and a potential golf course were also part of the project.

"Obviously we're disappointed with the outcome," said one of the property's developers, Herb Jonkers, who added that the decision wasn't a surprise. He said he wished the County Commission had given him the opportunity to more thoroughly discuss the details and possibilities for the project with county staff and the commissioners.

"I guess we'll be pursuing those things we can do by right and avoid going through any further approval process," Jonkers said. About 1,600 housing units are

already allowed on the portion of the quarry property that is zoned high-density residential, and Jonkers said he believes manufacturing and industrial uses are available as well because the would have been grandfathered in according to state code.

The property was used as an industrial site when the old quarry was active from the 1880 through 1974, prior to the adoption of the county's zoning ordinance.

Developers had agreed to scale down the office buildings and stay below the tree line, so the development would have had little impact on the viewshed from adjacent Harpers Ferry National Historical Park land. Jonkers said that will probably not happen now.

"These folks who think they've won the battle — they've won the battle but lost the war," he said. "What they're going to get is a whole lot worse than what we were willing to do."

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